GRAPHIC STORY.... OF ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS . SEA FIGHTS

Encounter of the Ram Tennessee with Farragut's Fleet in Mobile Bay, as Described by the Tennesse e's Surgeon.

From the New York Sun.

On the staff of Admiral Franklin Buchanan of the Confederate navy as fleet surgeon on the ram Tennessee in his fight with Farragut's fleet in Mobile Bay was Dr. Conrad, now of Winchester, Va. Dr. Conrad recently told the following story of the experiences inside the Tennessee on that oc-

The bay of Mobile was of infinite use and importance to the Confederates, who guarded and held it by two forts, Morgan and Gaines, at its entrance. By holding it they held safe the city of Mobile from attack by water; it could only be captured by a combined army and navy attack, so it was a safe depot for blockade runners, easy to go out of and enter, and if it was such to the Confederates how much greater was it to the Federals? For they were compelled to keep their large blockade fleet outside, exposed to all the storms of the Gulf. They could only be victualed and watered by going away, one at a time, to Pensacola, their only port; their sick had to be transported to the same place and the wear and tear both to vessels and crews was fearful, as a constant, vigilant and never-ceasing watch, both by officers and men, had to be kept up day and

The officers were in three watches, the men in two, guarding themselves against night attacks by torpedo boats or assault by the Confederate gunboats and seeing that no vessel came out and that none went in. All this had to be endured or the bay captured and held by the fleet. This was finally determined on by Farragut, and he only awaited the arrival of ironclads to make sure his end. Finding this plan determined on the Confederates bestirred themselves. At the hamlet of Selma, on the river above, they built one ironclad on the plan of the Merrimac, their resources being exhausted to do even this. Slowly the wooden structure approached completion, then more slowly was it ironed all over above the water line, then towed down to Mobile, where it was equipped with 8-inch rifle guns.

Then, when officers and men, provisions and water had been taken on board, all ready for action, she started down the bay, nearly thirty miles, to go outside in rough water and attack the enemy's wooden fleet before the ironclads arrived. On arriving at the bar of sand caused by Dog Run emptying into the bay, it was found extent that the ironclad, now christened the Tennessee, drew three feet more water than there was under her. The only expedient that offered itself which was safe and speedy was to build of huge square timbers two enortwo-story house. They were to be towed alongside of the ram and sunk to the water's edge by opening the valves. Then, all lashed together securely, making one vessel, as it were, of them, the water was pumped out of these tanks, and, the air entering, they, by their buoyancy, lifted the huge ship clear of the bottom. Then steam tugs towed her over the bar. This was done in May, 1864.

Finally one day we were towed over the bar down the bay. Then, casting oose, we steamed out to attack the Federal fleet. Reaching the passage between the two forts, we encountered rough water and found that, owing to want of buoyancy, we were in great danger of being waterlogged and sunk by the amount of water that swept inboard. The ram lay deep in the water, solid and motionless as a cast iron platform or raft, and every sea tumbling over her came inboard in such masses that the fires in the engine room were nearly put out and the gapty vessel itself filled with salt water. Discomfited, we put back under the fort in smooth water, and all thought of attacking the fleet outside was dismissed. Then the defects which this short cruise of ten hours had developed were looked into. Our engines had been taken from an old river boat. They were weak and old, and could only force us through the water about two miles an hour. They could not be strengthened by any method. The rudder chains, by which the ship was steered, were found to be exposed to the enemy's shot, being in their whole length outside the iron deck; they were covered over by a slight coating of iron rail. The capacity of the ram inboard to accommodate her crew was fearfully deficient. All officers and men, when the weather admitted, slept outside on top of the iron shield and decks, but in rainy times it was awful to endure such close quarters at night. We bore it in June and July, under the sloping sides of the shield, in shape like the roof of a square house about twelve feet in height and forty-eight in length. On July 26 Admiral Buchanan and staff came aboard, for, from his information, a fight was im-

increase in the Federal fleet, which was then listlessly at anchor outside of Fort Morgan, in the Gulf. This reinforcement consisted of ten wooder frigates, all stripped to a "girt line" and clean for action, their topmasts sent down on deck and devoid of everything that seemed like extra rigging They appeared like prize fighters ready for the ring. Then we knew that trouble was ahead, and wondered to ourselves why they did not enter the On Aug. 3 we noticed another addition to the already formidable fleet-four strange looking, long, black monsters, the new ironclads, and they were what the Federals had been so anxiously waiting for. At the distance of four miles their long, dark lines could only be distinguished from the sea, on which they sat motionless, by the continuous volume of thick smoke ssuing from their low smokestacks, which appeared to come out of the ocean itself. These curious-looking craft made their advent on the evening of Aug. 4, and then we knew that the "gage of battle" was offered. We had been very uncomfortable

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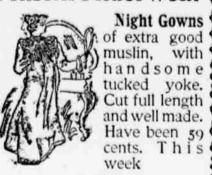
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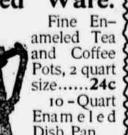
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for many weeks on board the Tenthe terribly moist, hot atmosphere, which was like that oppressiveness which precedes a tornado. It was, therefore, impossible to sleep inside; besides, from the want of properly cooked food and the continuous wetting of the decks at night, the officers and men were rendered desperate. We knew that the impending action would soon be determined one way or the other, and every one looked forward to it with a positive feeling of relief.

I had been sleeping on the deck of the admiral's cabin for two or three nights when at daybreak on Aug. 5 the old quartermaster came down the ladder and, rousing us with his gruff

"Admiral, the officer of the deck bids me report that the enemy's fleet is un-

Jumping up, still half asleep, came on deck, and sure enough there was the enemy heading for the passage past the fort. The admiral of sixty years, with his countenance rigid and stern, showing a determination for battle in every line, then gave his only or-

"Get under way, Capt. Johnson,

Head for the leading vessel of the enemy, and fight each one as it passes, fort and fleet by this time had opened fire, and the Tennessee replied, standing close in and meeting each foremost vessel as it came up. could see two long lines of men-ofwar, the innermost was composed of the four monitors, and the outer of the ten wooden frigates, all engaging the fort and fleet. Just at the moment we expected the monitors to open fire upon the enemy's fleet. We observed that one of the monitors was apparently at a standstill. It "laid to" for a moment, seemed to reel, then slowly disappeared the Gulf. Immediately immense bubbles of steam, as large as caldrons rose to the surface of the water, and only eight men could be seen in the turmoil. Boats were sent to their rescue, both from the fort and fleet, and they were saved. Thus the monitor Tecumseh, at the beginning of the fight, struck by the torpedo, went to her fate at the bottom of the Gulf, where she still lies. Sunk with her was her chivalrie commander, T. A. M. Craven. The pilot, an engineer, and two up by the Federal boats, and they were on duty in the turret.

The pilot, with whom I sometime afterward conversed at Pensacola on the subject, told me that when the vessel careened so that water began to into the mouth of turret he and Capt. Craven were on the ladder together, the captain on the top step with the way open for his easy and honorable escape. The pilot said:

"No, sir!" replied Capt. Craven. "After you, pilot; I leave my ship last!" Upon this the pilot sprung up and went down, thus sacrificing himself through a chivalric sense of

There was dead silence on board the Tennessee. The men peered through the portholes at the awful catastrophe and spoke to each other only in whispers, for they all knew that the same fate was probably awaiting us, for we were then directly over the "torpedo bed," and shut up tightly as we were in our "iron capsule" in a moment it might prove our .

At this juncture the enemy's leading nessee, in consequence of the prevail- vessel "backed water" and stoered to ing heavy rains wetting the decks, and one side, which arrested the progress of the whole squadron. But at this supreme moment the second vessel Admiral Farragut's flagship, the Hartford, forged ahead, and Farragut showing the nerve and determination of the officer and the man, gave the

> "Damn the torpedoes! Go ahead!" Away he went crashing through their bed to history and renown. Some of the officers told me afterward that they could hear the torpedoes snapping under the bottoms of their ships and that they expected every moment to be blown into high air. The slightest delay at that time on the part of Farragut, subjected as he was to the terrible fire of the fort and fleet, would have been disaster, defeat and the probable loss of his entire squadron, but he proved to be the man for the emergen-

We in the Tennessee, advancing very slowly, at the rate of about two miles an hour met the leading vessels of the enemy as they passed and fought them face to face, but their fire was so destructive, continuous, and severe that after we emerged from it there was nothing left standing as large as your little finger. Everything had been shot away-smokestacks, boats, davits, stanchions, and, in fact, "fore and aft" our deck had been swept absolutely clean. A few of our men were slightly passed us and been fought in turn we had been in action more than an hour and a half, and then the enemy's fleet, somewhat disabled, of course, kept on up the bay and anchored about four us there was a halt in the progress of the fight. Farragut had already won half the battle. He had passed the fort and fleet, and had ten wooden vessels and three monitors left in good fighting

Neither the officers nor men of either fleet had as yet been to breakfast, and the order was given, "Go to breakfast." For us on the Tennessee to eat below was simply impossible, on account of the heat and humidity. The heat was terrific. Intense thirst prevailed. The men rushed to the 'scuttle butts," or water tanks, and drank greedily. Soon 'hard tack" and coffee were furnished. the men all eating standing, creeping out of the ports of the shield to get a little fresh air, the officers going to the seamen were the only survivors picked upper deck. Admiral Buchanan, grim silent and rigid with prospective fighting, was stumping up and down the deck, lame from a wound received in his first engagement in the Merrimac, and in about fifteen ininutes we observed that instead of heading for the safe "lee" of the fort, our iron prow was pointed for the enemy's fleet. Suppressed exclamations were beginning to be heard from the officers and crew.

> "The old admiral has not had his fight out yet. He is heading for that big fleet. He will get his fill of it up there," they said. Slowly and gradually this fact be-

> came apparent to us, and I, being on his staff and in close association with him, ventured to ask him:

"Are you going into that fleet, nd-miral?" "I am, sir," was his reply. Without intending to be heard by him, I said to an officer standing near me: "Well, we'll never come out of there

whole, Buchanan had heard my remark, and, turning around, said sharply:

"That's my lookout, sir!"

he fight I may as well evol te deed of daring. He told me his te did not mean to be trapped like a ral Page in the defence of the place, This calculation was unluckily pre-

ented by the shooting away of cond engagement. As we approached he enemy's fleet, one after another of ut in a wide circle, and by the time we reached the point where the monicoming at us at the rate of ten miles an hour. A column of white foam, formed of the "dead water" piled in front of its bows many feet high. Heavy cannonading from the monitors was going on at this time, when this eading wooden vessel came rapidly earing down on us, bent on the struction of the formidable ram, which we on board the Tennessee fully realized as the supreme moment of the test of our strength. We had escaped from the "torpedo bed" safe and were now to take our chances of being rur under by the heavy wooden frigates

that were fast nearing us. Captain Johnson, in the pilot house ow gave the word to flicers and men; "Steady yourselves when she strikes;

stand by and be ready.' Not a word was heard on the deck under its shelving roof, where the officers and men, standing by their guns, appeared, silent and rigid, awaiting

their fate. Captain Johnson shouted "We are all right. They can never un us under now.

As he spoke the leading vessel had struck against our overhang with tremendous impact, had shivered its iron prow in the clash, but only succeeded whiriing the Tennessee around as if she were swung on a pivot. I was sitting on the combing of the hatch. having nothing to do as yet, a close observer as each vessel in turn struck us, and our "black wales" came in contact. At a distance of ten feet they soured their broadsides of twenty IIinch guns into us. This continued for more than an hour, and as each vessel "rammed" the Tennessee and slid alongside they discharged their broadsides fast and furious, so that the noise was one continuous deafening You could only hear voices when close to the speaker, and the reverberation was so great that bleeding at the nose

Soon the wounded began to pour down to me. Stripped to their waist, the white skins of the men exhibited curious dark blue spots. I found that unburnt cubes of cannon powder that had poured into the port had perforated the fiesh and made these great blue ridges under the skin. Their sufferings were very severe, for it was as if they had been shot with hot bullets, but no serious effects followed. All the wooden vessels, disabled and their prows broken off, anchored in succession over a mile away. Then Admiral Farragut signalled to the monitors: "Destroy the ram!"

was not infrequent.

Soon these three grim monsters, at thirty yards distance, took their position on each quarter of the Tennessee

And now began the second part of der having been shot away with grape it is your fight." did this much-criticised and desper- hopelessly disabled, and that victory was impossible, as all we could do was easons long afterward, as follows: He to move around very slowly in a circle, ad only six hours' coal on board, and | and the only chance left to us was to intended to expend that in fighting, crawl under the shelter of Fort Morgan. For an hour and a half the monat in a hole and made to surrender liters pounded us with solid shot fired vithout a struggle. Then he meant to with a charge of sixty pounds from to the lee of the fort and assist Gen- their II-inch guns, determined to crush in the "shield" of the Tennessee, Thirty pounds of powder was the "regulation amount." In the midst of this continu udder chains of the Tennessee in this ous pounding the portshutterofone of our guns was jammed by a shot, making it impossible to work the piece Farraguts ten wooden frigates swept The Admiral then sent for some of the firemen from below to drive the bolt out. Four men came up and, two of tors were a huge leading frigate was them holding the bolt back, the others struck it with sledge hammers. While they were working suddenly there was

> a dull-sounding impact, and at the same instant the men whose backs were against the shield were blown to Engineer J. C. O'Connell, one of the others, had a pistol ball through his shoulder.

> "How in the world did you manage get this?" I asked him. "Why, I was off watch and had nothing to do, so while the Hartford was lying alongside of us a Yankee cursed me through the porthole and I jabbed him with my bayonet in the body, and his comrade shot me with his revolver,"

he said. Cutting the ball out, I proposed to give him morphine, as he was suffering

but he said: "None of that for me, doctor, When we go down I want to be up and take my chances of getting out of some porthole." Another man was wounded in the ear when fighting in the same manner as the engineer, but he always declared he got even by the use of his bayonet. I mention these facts to show how close the fighting was, when men could kill each other through the portoles of each vessel.

While attending the engineer Aide Carter came down the ladder in great haste and said: "Doctor, the Admiral is wounded

"Well, bring him below," I replied. "I can't do it." he answered "haven't time. I'm carrying orders for Capt. Johnson. So up I went, asking some officer whom I saw:

"Where is the Admiral?" "Don't know," he replied, "We are all at work loading and firing; got too much to do to think of anything else."

Then I looked for the gallant commander myself, and, lying curled up under the sharp angle of the roof, discovered the old white-haired man. He to aid his former shipmate, the woundwas grim and silent and betrayed no evidence of his great pain. I went up to him and asked: "Admiral, are you badly hurt?"
"Don't know," he replied, but I saw

ne of his legs crushed up under his body and as I could get no help raised him up with great caution, and clasping his arms around my neck carried him on my back down the ladder to against me as we moved slowly along. After applying a temporary bandage he sat up on the deck and received reports from Captain Johnson regarding the progress of the fight. Johnson soon came down in person and

the Admiral greeted him:

as she lay nearly motionless, her rud- You'll have to look out for her now; the "man rope," I mounted the ham-

I'll do the best I know how.' In the course of half an hour Captain ohnson again appeared below and reported to the Admiral that all the frigates had "hauled off," but that three monitors had taken position on our quarters. He added that we could not bring a gun to bear and that the nemy's solid shot were gradually mashing in the "shield," and not having been able to fire for thirty minutes the men were fast becoming demoralized from sheer inactivity, and that from the smashing of the shield they were seeking shelter, which showed

their condition mentally, "Well, Johnson," said the admiral at this precarious juncture, "fight to the last. Then, to save these brave men, when there is no longer hope, surren-

In twenty minutes more the firing eased, Capt. Johnson having bravely rone up alone on the exposed roof with handkerchief on a boarding pike and he surrender was effected. carried all our wounded upon the roof into the fresh air, which they so much

From that clevated place I witnessed the rush of the petty officers and men of the monitors which were nearest to us to board the captured ship, to procure relics and newspaper renown. Two men dressed in blue shirts, begrimed and black with powder, rushed up to the wounded admiral and demanded his sword. His aide refused peremptorily, whereupon one of them stooped as if to take it, upon which Aide Forrest warned him not to touch it, as it would only be given to Admiral Farragut or his authorized representative. Still the man attempted to seize it, whereupon Forrest knocked him off the "shield" to the deck below. At this critical moment, when a fight was imminent, I saw a boat nearing, flying a captain's pennant, and running down as it came alongside, I recognized an old shipmate. Capt. Le Roy. Hurriedly explaining to him our position, he mounted the shield, and assuming command, he arrested the obnoxious man and sent

him under guard to his boat. The sword was then given to Capt. Giraud by Admiral Buchanan, to be carried to Admiral Farragut. Our flag. smoke-stained and torn, had seized by the other man and hastily concealed in his shirt bosom. He was brought before Capt. Le Koy, and amid the laughter and jeers of his companions was compelled to draw it forth from his hiding place, and it was sent on board the flagship.

Capt. Le Roy, who was an old friend of us both, did everything in his power ed admiral. He brought a kind mes sage from Admiral Farragut, in which the latter expressed regret to hear of Admiral Buchanan's wound, and offered to do anything in his power, wishing to know what he desired. This was accepted by Admiral Buchanan in the same kind spirit in which it was given, and as one of the staff officers I was sent on board the Hartford with the cockpit, his broken leg slapping the reply that, appreciating the kind message, he had only to ask that his fleet surgeon and his aides might be allowed to accompany him wherever he might be sent, until his recovery from his wound.

Boarding the Hartford by Capt. Le "Well, Johnson, they have got me. | Roy's steam launch, and ascending by

been carried away as I was afterward told, by one of their own frigates having collided with the Hartford after "ramming" the Tennessee. From the hammock netting the scene was one of carnage and devastation. The spar deck was covered and littered with broken gun carriages, shattered boats, disabled guns, and a long line of dead men dressed in blue, lying side by side, The two whole guns' crews were all killed by splinters. I saw one ten feet long and four inches wide, and received my first vivid idea of what a splinter was, or what was meant by a splinter.

Descending, we threaded our way, and ascending the poop, where all the officers were standing, I was taken up and introduced to Admiral Farragut. In the kindliest manner he inquired regarding the severity of the admiral's wound, and then gave the necessary orders to carry out Admiral Buchan-an's request. We then thought that the admiral's leg would have to be amputated that evening or the next morning. In speaking to the admiral about his chances of recovery and the pro-

posed amputation, he replied: "I have nothing to do with it. It is your leg now. Do your best." It was this spirit of firmness and equaninativ which not only saved Admiral Buchanan's life, but ultimately board of Capt. James Jouett's ship, the Metacomet, which was temporarily converted into a hospital. We remained on board that night, and were cared for in a very kind way by Capt. Jouett. to whom Admiral Buchanan always ex-

pressed himself as deeply indebted.

The next morning, at my suggestion, flag of truce was sent to General Page, commanding Fort Morgan, representing our conditon, sending the names of our dead and wounded and the great number of Federal dead and wounded on board, and asking, in the name of humanity, to be allowed to pass the fort and convey them to the large naval hospital at Pensacola, where they all could receive the same treatment. To this request General Page promptly responded, and we passed out, and in eight hours were all safely housed in the ample hospital, where we were treated by old naval friends in the warmest and kindest manner. Medical Director Turner was in charge, and we remained there until December, when Admiral Buchanan, being able to hobble around on crutches, was conveyed to Fort Warren, with his aides, and I was sent back to Mobile, in Capt. Jouett's ship under a

Daily with the admiral in the hospital at Pensacola for four months he explained his whole plan of action to me of that second fight in Mobile Bay, as

"I did not expect to do the passing vessels any serious injury. The guns of Fort Morgan were thought capable of doing that. I expected that the monitors would then and there surround me and pound the shield in, but when all the Federal vessels passed up and anchored four miles away, then I saw that a long siege was intended by the army and navy, which, with its numerous transports at anchor under Pelican Island, were debarking nearly 10,000 infantry. Having the example before me of the blow-

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